

Secretaries complete series of college-level classes to refresh business English skills

Congratulations are in order for the more than 230 secretaries who recently completed a series of college-level business English classes designed to ensure they possess a solid up-to-date grammar foundation.

The Communication Skills Building Blocks Series, otherwise known as Building Blocks, began last August as a one-year training requirement targeted at all JSC secretaries. The task at hand was rigorous: take 14 three-hour "modules" over the course of one year and a post assessment at the conclusion of each module; or take a skills assessment before taking any of the classes potentially to "place out" of selected modules.

Realizing that the secretary's success is important to the center's ability to meet its commitments, JSC Director George Abbey asked the Human Resources Office to develop a comprehensive approach to training the secretarial workforce so that they could become more versatile in their skills, remain proficient in leading-edge office technologies, and increase their competitiveness for future positions.

With that in mind, Nancy Garrick of the Human Resources Development Branch took on the task. The result was a completely revamped office support training curriculum with the Building Blocks being the key component. The new curriculum features required core

classes and optional supplemental classes designed to emphasize basic skills development, enhancement, and refinement with the Building Blocks series laying the foundation.

When this effort began, close to 200 secretaries opted to take the skills assessment, which individually evaluated their grammar skills. To ensure excellence, a score of 85 percent or better was needed to "place out" of selected modules. Yet, some secretaries who passed the entire skills assessment elected to take all the classes to reinforce their grammar skills.

Flight Crew Operations Director David Leestma even took the assessment so that he would be aware of the types of things the secretaries in his organization would be required to learn.

"I took the assessment," Leestma said, "and it was tough! I was lucky and had an excellent English teacher, who was also my mother, who drilled me on grammar and punctuation constantly. It was interesting to test how much I had remembered, and surprising to see that some of the rules have changed."

After the assessments were scored and the results returned, the task of scheduling multiple classes for each module began. The 14 modules became the secretarial standard for learning grammar all over again. For the secretaries who wanted to spend more time than the required three hours, a full eight-hour class was

offered. Maureen Giacchino, owner of The Training Team and teacher of the Building Blocks, was also available for tutoring. Giacchino's sense of humor and style made each class fun and interesting, Garrick said.

Under Giacchino's tutelage, the secretaries delved into parts of speech, identified nouns and substituted pronouns. They tensed verbs, and taught them to agree; unsplit infinitives and undangled participles; modified with adjectives and adverbs; drove straight through conjunction junction; wrote sentences that questioned and exclaimed; punctuated with colons and semicolons; and ended with an element of style.

"The secretaries took a very daunting task and turned it into a positive, learning experience. And that showed their professionalism," Flight Crew Operations secretary Elaine Kemp said on behalf of the Senior Secretarial Council.

At the conclusion of the one-year effort all of the civil service secretaries had participated in some way, and 97 percent had completed the requirement. A group of almost 50 secretaries worked with Giacchino and Garrick to plan a graduation extravaganza, which included awards, speakers, decorations, food, punch and music. More than 200 secretaries came to the Building Blocks Bash on Oct. 7 at the Gilruth Center.

"Your success is important to us and critical to the center's ability to meet its commitments," Abbey said. "I



JSC Photo

Secretaries celebrate the completion of the Building Blocks courses. From left are Laura Jackson, Isabel Elizondo, Claudia Pruneda and Debra Eaton.

can't over emphasize how important you are to our success."

Several senior staff members also attended the ceremony.

"I have been a strong supporter of the program, first in Mission Operations and now in Business Management," said Business Management Director James Shannon. "I am so proud of the high percentage of the secretaries at the center who completed the program. In every sector of the center the secretarial workforce is a key factor to our success. I look forward now to the real payoff,

which is continued professional excellence."

"NASA is lucky to have such a great group of secretaries. You met every challenge that was given to you with style and class," Giacchino said. "Teachers dream of moments like this. I learned and received as much as you did from the program."

A new set of Building Blocks began in September and will continue for another year for those who didn't complete the initial set and for the new secretaries who were hired since the effort began.

People on the Move

Human Resources reports the following personnel changes as of November 22:

Additions to the Workforce

Barbara Corbin joins the Space Operations Business Management Office as a business analyst.

Promotions

Beverly Yell was selected as a secretary in the Advanced Development Office of the Engineering Directorate.

Reassignments Between Directorates

Susan Sinclair moves from the Safety, Reliability, and Quality Assurance Office to the Mission Operations Directorate.

Retirements

Rhea Seddon of the Flight Crew Operations Directorate.
Dave Forward of the Space Shuttle Program Office.

Resignations

Susan Cupples of the Engineering Directorate.

Dunn earns top secretary award

Linda Dunn received the Marilyn J. Bocking Secretarial Award for Excellence in October.

Dunn was recognized for her ability to be adaptable and flexible as a division-level secretary for the Assessment Office in the Business Management Directorate during an extremely active year and a half in that office. While the Business Management Directorate was undergoing many different changes at the

helm, during a period of massive reorganization, Dunn managed to keep everything together. Organization and coordination of office events did not suffer.

Her dedication and willingness to assist in the professional and friendly manner she maintains and her motivation and dependability earned her the nomination.

Along with her success in supporting the Business Management

Directorate office, she also is pursuing her own professional development. She is working on obtaining her bachelor's degree in business management, and has also participated in Project IQ, Office Support Curriculum and Secretarial Communication Skill Building Block Series.

Dunn is now a purchasing agent for the Institutional Business Management Office.

Krishen earns technological achievement award

Dr. Kumar Krishen, chief technologist for the Technology Transfer and Commercialization Office at JSC, recently was awarded the 1997 Business Opportunity Symposium Series Conference Outstanding Technological Achievement Award.

Krishen was presented the award for his advancement of original concepts regarding health systems, remote sensing, sensor systems, mission support technologies,

automation and robotics technologies, science payloads, and communications and tracking systems.

His work at NASA includes developing strategies for joint research, technology projects and plans with universities, industries, government agencies and other NASA centers.

Krishen is involved with numerous agency, interagency and international panels and committees. He also is the post-doctoral adviser

for the NASA NRC Program, and doctoral adviser for the NASA Graduate Program and Summer Faculty Program.

Krishen is the principal technologist and JSC representative on the NASA Council on Science and Technology.



Krishen

Dates & Data

Dec. 8

Space Act of 1958: Dr. Eilene Galloway will speak on her participation in formulating the 1958 Space Act and international Sputnik relations at 3 p.m. Dec. 8 in Bldg. 30A Auditorium. For more information call John Stanford at x31347.

Dec. 9

Aero club meets: The Bay Area Aero Club will meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 9 at the Houston Gulf Airport clubhouse at 2750 FM 1266 in League City. For more information call Larry Hendrickson at x32050.

NPMA meets: The National Property Management Association will meet at 5 p.m. Dec. 9 at Robinette and Doyle Caterers, 216 Kirby in Seabrook. Dinner costs \$14. For more information call Sina Hawsey at x36582.

Dec 10.

PSI meets: The Clear Lake/NASA Chapter of Professional Secretaries International will meet at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 10 at the Holiday Inn, NASA Road 1. Dinner costs \$13. For details, call Elaine Kemp at x30556.

Astronomy seminar: The JSC Astronomy Club will meet at noon Dec. 10 in Bldg. 31, Rm. 129. An open discussion meeting is planned. For more information, call Al Jackson at x35037.

Communicators meet: The Clear Lake Communicators will meet at 11:30 a.m. Dec. 10 at Lockheed Martin, 555 Forge River Road. For more information, contact Richard Lehman at 281-333-6004 or Melissa Sommers at 281-332-0698.

Spaceland Toastmasters meet: The Spaceland Toastmasters will meet at 7 a.m. Dec. 10 at the House of Prayer Lutheran Church. For more information, call Jeannette Darcy at x45752.

Spaceteam Toastmasters meet: The Spaceteam Toastmasters will meet at 11:30 a.m. Dec. 10 at United Space Alliance, 600 Gemini. For details, call Patricia Blackwell at 281-282-4302 or Brian Collins at x35190.

Dec. 11

MAES meets: The Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists will meet at 5 p.m. Dec.11

at Mario's Pizza in Webster. For more information, call Gerard Valle at x38835.

Radio club meets: The JSC Amateur Radio Club will meet for its November/December meeting at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 11 at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, 2465 Bay Area Blvd. For details, call Larry Dietrich at x39198.

Dec. 12

Astronomers meet: The JSC Astronomical Society will meet at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 12 at the Center for Advanced Space Studies, 3600 Bay Area Blvd. For more information, call Chuck Shaw at x35416.

Space Society meets: The Clear Lake area chapter of the National Space Society will meet at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 12 at the Radisson Hotel - Hobby Airport. Dr. Norman LaFave will speak on the "Cosmos Mariner - Reusable Launch Vehicle." For details, call Murray Clark at (281) 367-2227.

Dec. 17

STS-87 briefing: If landing is on time, the STS-87 astronauts will brief employees on their mission at 7

p.m. Dec. 17 in the IMAX Theater at Space Center Houston. The event will be open to all JSC employees, contractors, friends, family members, and public guests. An award presentation, with JSC Director George Abbey presenting the crew's Space Flight Medals and Lead Flight Director Bill Reeves presenting other awards to key players in the mission will precede the crew briefing. After the crew's presentation, the IMAX movie "The Dream is Alive" will be shown. For more information, call Helen Harris at x38413.

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Scuba club meets: The Lunarfins will meet at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 17 at the Redfish Restaurant under the Kemah/Seabrook bridge, Seabrook side. For more information, call Fred Toole at x33201.

Dec. 18

Child Care directors meet: The Space Family Education board of directors will meet at 11:30 a.m. Dec. 18 in Bldg. 45, Rm. 712D. For more information on this open meeting, call Gretchen Thomas at x37664.

Dec. 25

Christmas Day: Most JSC offices will be closed Dec. 25 and 26 in observance of the Christmas holiday.